



## Strategic Plan 2020-2024

*Working Document  
Approved February 18, 2021*

### Introduction

Like many cultural organizations around the world, the DuPage Symphony (DSO) experienced serious consequences from the coronavirus pandemic and was forced to cancel all of its large-scale performances and events scheduled for 2020 and early 2021. While the DSO's musicians pivoted to small group and online performances, the DSO's Board of Directors used this time to focus on the long-term, developing strategies to carry the orchestra through this disruption and into our 70<sup>th</sup> season in 2023-24. The Strategic Planning Committee intends its next plan will cover a five-year period, bringing us to our 75<sup>th</sup> season celebration in 2028-29.

### About Us

The DuPage Symphony Orchestra (DSO) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded in 1954 with forty-five volunteer musicians. Russell Harvey, a co-founder of the orchestra, led the organization as Music Director for 31 years. In 1986 Maestra Barbara Schubert became our Music Director and under her dynamic leadership, the DSO has grown to encompass more than 90 highly talented volunteer musicians and present an ambitious and imaginative variety of concerts each year.

The DSO is governed by a Board of Directors of 15 – 20 community leaders, who can serve up to two three-year terms. The Board's work is largely conducted through its various committees as approved by the Board.

We continue to recruit musicians with unparalleled skill and dedication, strengthening our performance capabilities and expanding our repertoire. This, in turn, helps broaden the musical experiences and knowledge of our audiences. Our subscription and family concerts are performed at the acoustically stellar Wentz Concert Hall, on the campus of North Central College, located in the heart of downtown Naperville.

The DSO's Board recognizes that past performance is no guarantee of future success. Audience tastes and interests in music and the arts has and will continue to evolve and funding sources for the arts will reflect these changes. Accordingly, the DSO's Board has engaged in a strategic planning process to focus and strengthen our ability to successfully pursue our mission and vision in a changing arts environment.

### Mission

Provide inspiration and cultural enrichment through musical excellence, educational programs, and community outreach.

### Vision

Transforming hearts, minds, and communities through music.

## Core Values

We honor our TEAM

- We each CONTRIBUTE and COLLABORATE together to advance the DSO

We cherish our COMMUNITY

- We are OPEN and WELCOMING, RESPECTING the full diverse range of backgrounds and experiences of those with whom we interact

We are committed to EXCELLENCE

- We CONTINUOUSLY STRIVE to be our best and act with INTEGRITY

## Key Areas of Focus

To help ensure our long-term growth and stability, our Strategic Plan focuses on:

- **Building organizational strength** – Attracting, engaging, and retaining talented and diverse musicians, staff and volunteers to execute the DSO mission and effectively and compliantly function as a nonprofit cultural organization.
- **Achieving artistic excellence** – Achieving the highest level of artistic performance in our programs and concerts.
- **Developing strong audience and donor relationships** – Building sustainable and diverse patron relationships throughout the greater DuPage County area.
- **Engaging and educating the greater DuPage County area** – Bringing the joy of music to our communities through a variety of educational and community engagement programs.
- **Ensuring long-term financial stability** – Ensuring a strong financial foundation to support the organization's growth strategies.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** – Continually work to better reflect the communities we serve from multiple perspectives, artistic as well as board, staff, volunteer and audience perspectives.

## Strategic Priorities 2021-2024

- Drive organizational strength and effectiveness by attracting, developing and retaining diverse talent for board, volunteer and orchestra membership.
- Cultivate diverse audiences and donors through inspirational orchestral, chamber, and small group performances.
- Enrich our community and reach new audiences through targeted youth educational and community engagement programs.
- Sustain a solid financial foundation to support future growth through ongoing donor development, strong programming and sound financial practices.

## Drive organizational strength and effectiveness through attracting, developing and retaining diverse talent.

- Recruit and retain a diverse group of gifted musicians, staff, board members, and volunteers to serve the organization.
  - Increase Board size to consist of 15 – 20 directors, fill these seats with diverse candidates and establish succession planning process for key positions.
  - Expand DSO staffing by either increasing staff hours or adding new positions such as a part-time Music Education Coordinator as the scope of the DSO's activities increase.
  - Evaluate viability of creating an Orchestra Guild (volunteer corps) and/or Junior/Auxiliary Board.
- Create professional development strategy and allocate appropriate budget to enhance staff and board effectiveness and facilitate adoption of best practices for non-profit Boards and orchestra/performing arts organizations.
- Create and foster a culture that includes maintaining a consistent and transparent process for communication between committees, board, staff, and orchestra members.
- Establish a schedule to ensure on-going compliance with legal requirements, internal objectives and processes, including providing relevant orientation or training as appropriate.

## Cultivate diverse audiences and donors through inspirational orchestral, chamber, and small group performances.

- Consistently produce symphonic programs (both live and virtual) of exceptional quality. [Music Director]
  - Evaluate creation of an artistic statement or artistic guidelines to govern our programming and repertoire and can encompass a variety of performance venues, formats and audiences.
  - Develop initiatives to increase diversity in the orchestra membership and programming (composers, guest artists, etc.).
  - Establish a bona-fide chamber music/chamber orchestra season featuring a variety of ensembles performing in a variety of locations throughout the county.
  - Consider expanding concert programming to include a Family Series (3 concerts), Pops Series (2 concerts), two double season concerts.
- Expand audience and donor cultivation initiatives to connect with a diverse variety of supporters year-round.
  - Benchmark audience engagement/donor cultivation strategies of orchestras on our watch list.
  - Develop initiatives to cultivate and connect with a diverse variety of supporters year-round.
    - Potential cultivation efforts to focus on enhancing access and experience such as hosting happy hour/luncheon/dinner receptions including an annual Gala, holding meet & greet sessions with Music Director, guest soloists or YAA winner, conducting a VIP Season Kick-Off fundraiser and conducting informational music/composer lectures.
    - Explore enhanced/additional opportunities for donor programs (i.e., corporate/chair sponsorship, monthly giving, major donor, estate/planned giving, etc.).

## Enrich our community and reach new audiences through targeted youth educational and community engagement programs.

- Support Music Education in Greater DuPage County by establishing and cultivating viable relationships with area youth orchestras, school districts, and music schools.
  - Survey/Meet with area schools to understand their needs; use key learnings to develop programs (both virtually and in-person) to meet these needs with a special focus on offering guest-artist mentorship opportunities, Boy/Girl Scout activities and helping low-income students with limited access to instruments and music instruction.
  - Execute youth-targeted engagement opportunities such as focusing Open Dress Rehearsals on specific age groups or audiences; strengthening partnerships with groups like Naperville's Young Composers Club; establishing scholarship programs for area schools as done in Evanston and furnishing printed materials to enhance audience experience.
  - Improve and expand educational content on website to support DSO concerts and activities.
- Establish collaborative partnerships to enhance impact in the greater DuPage County area.
  - Analyze area suburbs to identify and prioritize expansion targets and develop strategies to build relationships in those areas, including conducting "roadshows" to increase awareness of and promote the DSO to a broad range of community organizations.
  - Recruit small group ensembles (targeted for families/kids/schools audiences as well as general community outreach) to work with the Education/Outreach Committee in scheduling with various community groups. (Groups could perform the same program in multiple locations.)
  - Develop plan to mount events to appeal specifically to listeners in the 30's-40's age range.
- Develop clear objectives and measurable impact stats for all programs. Identify and secure sustainable resources to continue to run programs long term and facilitate its eventual transition to a staff function executed by part-time, paid experts supported by trained volunteers and overseen by EO & CE committee.

## Sustain a solid financial foundation to support future growth through ongoing donor development, strong programming and sound financial practices.

- Ensure financial stability to support future growth, including implementing a multi-year budgeting process and ensuring proper financial controls and compliance processes are in place.
  - Research a broad spectrum of foundations supporting non-profit cultural organizations to identify opportunities to apply for grants.
  - Post-COVID rebuild financial reserves and rebalance funding portfolio to avoid reliance on a single source.
  - Research how to create and establish both a Planned Giving program and an Endowment fund with goal to launch a \$1,000,000 campaign by our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## Conclusion

The DSO's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan is intended to guide the organization's decision-making processes in fulfillment of its mission and vision. As a living document, this Strategic Plan will be updated on a regular basis to reflect changes in priorities, opportunities, projects and objectives as our environment and community evolve. Implementation of the Strategic Plan will be monitored by the DSO Board of Directors and Strategic Planning Committee, with an updated version presented to the Board annually for approval.